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SUBJECT: UNESCO: DG DEPLORES KILLING OF IRAQI
REUTERS STAFF

1. SUMMARY: On August 31, the UNESCO Director General, Koichiro Matsuura, issued a statement that deplored the killing of a Reuters sound engineer by U.S. forces in Iraq on August 28, 2005. The statement, which UNESCO issued after the UN press office asked them to respond, did not directly implicate U.S. forces. UNESCO is the only UN agency with a mandate to defend press freedom. UNESCO Secretariat staff routinely works with media watchdog NGOs to determine if a journalist was killed while practicing his profession and then issues statements as part of its commitment to promoting media freedom worldwide. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN TEXT OF DG STATEMENT

Director-General deplores killing in Iraq of
Reuters sound engineer Waleed Khaled
August 31, 2005

The Director-General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura today deplored the killing of Reuters sound engineer Waleed Khaled, in Baghdad on August 28, and the injuries inflicted on his colleague Haider Kadhem. He called on all the forces present in the country to exercise vigilance to protect journalists in the exercise of their profession.

"I deplore the killing of Waleed Khaled and the injuries inflicted on his colleague, cameraman Haider Kadhem," the Director-General said. "Despite the tense security situation in Iraq, it is paramount that all those willing to help establish democracy in Iraq be mindful of the right of the media to exercise their profession freely. I trust that the ongoing U.S. investigation will explain the circumstances of events fully and pave the way for improvements in the future. This is essential as the ability of the press to report freely on the situation in Iraq plays a key role in the future success of the democratic reconstruction of the country," Mr. Matsuura added.

Both Mr. Khaled and Mr. Kadhem, Iraqi nationals working for the news agency Reuters, were sent to report on an incident in the Hay al-Adil district of Baghdad.

END TEXT OF DG STATEMENT

3. COMMENT: Mission notes that Matsuura's statement followed one from the UN Secretary General's spokesperson which condemned the general killing of journalists trying to do their work. Mission observes that UNESCO did not specifically implicate the United States in its statement, though most media NGOs that work closely with UNESCO issued tough statements that did. Moreover, senior UNESCO Secretariat staff did not raise the issue in meetings with U.S. counterparts during the week of the press release.

Oliver